

# BOSTON TRASH AND RECYCLING GUIDE

The City of Boston offers recycling, food waste composting, textile, and trash collection for residents. Read on to learn how you can reduce waste as a resident. For more information, visit [boston.gov/zero-waste](https://boston.gov/zero-waste)

CITY of **BOSTON**

2228-04



Public Works



BOSTON  
RECYCLING

**BOS:311**

The City of Boston is dedicated to reducing our waste. You can help by participating in our waste reduction programs and by managing your waste responsibly. Learn more at **[boston.gov/zero-waste](https://boston.gov/zero-waste)**

### **DONATE/REUSE**

Donate unwanted items instead of throwing them out.

Visit **[boston.gov/zero-waste-directory](https://boston.gov/zero-waste-directory)**

### **TRASH DAY APP**

Download the app and find your collection schedule, learn about what you can and can't recycle, and more!

### **BREAK IT DOWN**

Break down all cardboard before you recycle it.

### **RECYCLE YOUR TEXTILES**

We have drop boxes all across the city where you can drop clothing and textiles or to schedule a home pickup visit **[boston.gov/textiles](https://boston.gov/textiles)**

### **IS IT CLEAN?**

Rinse recyclable items before you put them in your blue recycling bin.

### **NO PLASTIC BAGS!**

Plastic bags should be put in the trash.

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## ZERO WASTE

The Zero Waste Boston Initiative strives to divert at least 80 to 90 percent of its solid waste from landfill and waste to energy facilities by 2035. We are working hard, but we can't do it alone!

We need you, members of the Boston community, to reach our goal. Thoughtful waste management, choosing to recycle right, and participating in some of our waste reduction programs goes a long way.

To learn more about Boston's zero waste plan, visit **[boston.gov/zero-waste](https://boston.gov/zero-waste)**



## TRASH DAY APP

With our free Trash Day app, you can view a calendar for your home's collection day, set reminders, and get notifications schedule changes and new waste reduction programs.

You can even use the app to learn about what you can and can't recycle in Boston. Search the directory of hundreds of household items and find out the right way to dispose of them.

Learn more at **[boston.gov/zero-waste](https://boston.gov/zero-waste)**



## RECYCLING TIPS

### RECYCLE ON TRASH DAY

Set recycling out by 6 a.m. on the same day you set out your trash. If your trash is collected twice per week, place recycling out on both days. Remember to separate recycling from trash before placing it on the curb.

### RECYCLING CONTAINER OPTIONS

All recyclable materials must be in one of the following containers:

#### 1. Large wheeled carts

If your residence is six units or less, the City can provide you with a large wheeled cart.

These carts are large and must be wheeled to the recycling truck instead of carried. Please keep these tips in mind:

- For easy access, place your cart in front of your home on the curb, away from parked cars and not on private property.
- During the winter, place your cart next to or in front of snowbanks. Do not place carts behind snowbanks.

#### 2. Converted trash cans

You can convert a trash can into a recycling container by placing a recycling sticker on the outside. Recycling cans should not be larger than 32 gallons. If they are larger, they must be able to attach to a lifting mechanism on a recycling truck.

You can request an official recycle sticker or recycling cart (subject to approval) through BOS:311 by dialing **3-1-1**. Visit **[boston.gov/311](https://www.boston.gov/311)** for more information.

### **3. Clear plastic bags**

Clear plastic bags are only allowed if you do not have enough space for a blue recycling bin in the following neighborhoods:

Back Bay/Bay Village, Beacon Hill, Charlestown, Chinatown, Downtown, East Boston, Fenway, Mission Hill, North End, Roxbury, South Boston, the South End, and West End.

Bags need to be 32 gallons or less. Do not put recyclables in plastic grocery bags. Clear plastic recycling bags are available at local retailers.

Learn more at [\*\*boston.gov/recycling\*\*](https://boston.gov/recycling)

### **RECYCLING IN LARGE APARTMENT BUILDINGS AND CONDOS**

Buildings with more than six residential units are considered large. Large buildings that receive City trash pickup services are required by City ordinance to have recycling programs.

Large building owners or condo associations must provide and maintain large wheeled carts that go in centralized locations for all building residents. To request recycling in a large building, contact BOS:311 by dialing **3-1-1**.

## ITEMS YOU CAN RECYCLE IN THE BLUE BIN

Remember to **always rinse and wash** your items before putting them in the recycling.

- **Clean pizza boxes:** remove food, pizza savers (pizza tables), and liners
- **Aluminum and tin cans:** including potato chips and coffee cans
- **Paper:** newspaper, magazines, catalogs, paperback books, white and colored paper
- **Boxboard:** paper bags, egg cartons, and cereal boxes
- **Glass:** jars and bottles
- **Plastic:** all containers (except plastic bags)

## ITEMS YOU CAN'T RECYCLE IN THE BLUE BIN

- **Plastic shopping bags:** plastic grocery and garbage bags (return clean plastic bags to a participating retailer for recycling)
- **Disposable items:** styrofoam, disposable cups, plates, napkins, paper towels, tissues, straws, and coffee pods
- **Plastic wraps:** bubble wrap, film, and tarps
- **Tanglers:** no coat hangers, hoses, rope, or chains
- **Medical waste:** no syringes and pills
- **Containers:** used for chemicals and motor oil
- **Electronics:** batteries, light bulbs, extension cords
- **Cartons:** milk, orange juice, soup
- **Ceramics:** pots, pans, and glass
- **Food waste:** compost instead
- **Textile waste:** donate if you can

# TRASH TIPS

## HOW TO PREPARE YOUR TRASH

**1** Trash should be neatly stored on your property in barrels or containers. Barrels or containers should:

- Be metal or made of durable plastic
- Have a lid
- Not be larger than 32 gallons (unless it can attach to a lifting mechanism, then it can be up to 96 gallons), and
- Not weigh more than 50 pounds.

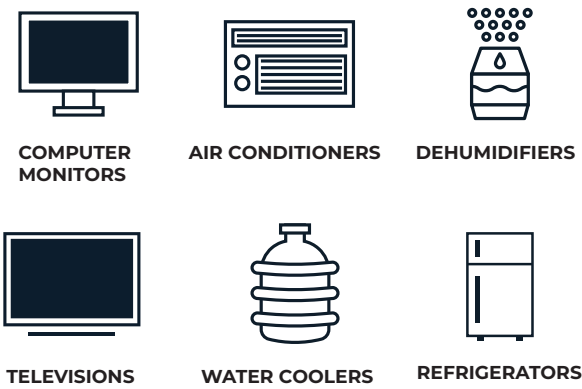
**2** Trash must be placed at the curb by 6 a.m., or after 5 p.m. the night before your scheduled trash day.

**3** All trash materials must fit inside the barrels and containers. If you use trash bags, they must be .9mil or greater plastic material and can't be larger than 32 gallons.

**4** Placing trash in kitchen bags, grocery bags, paper bags, cartons, or boxes is not acceptable, and might result in a code violation.

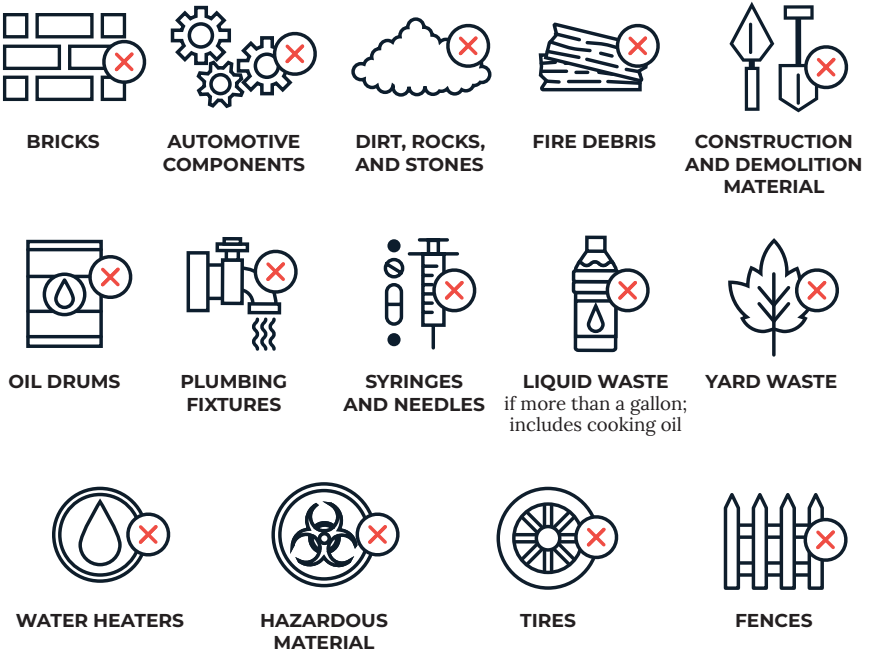


Certain items can't be put in the regular trash or recycling. Instead, they need to be scheduled for a special pickup. Call **3-1-1** or visit **[boston.gov/311](https://www.boston.gov/311)** to schedule a pickup of these items:



**ITEMS YOU CAN'T PUT IN THE TRASH OR RECYCLING**

If these items are reusable, donate them. Otherwise, you have to hire a private company to collect them.



## LEAF AND YARD WASTE

### SEASONAL LEAF AND YARD WASTE COLLECTION

Leaf and yard waste is collected from April through December on designated yard waste collection weeks. Here are some tips:

- Place leaves and yard debris in large paper leaf bags or open barrels labeled “yard waste” (do not use plastic bags).
- You can get yard waste stickers for your barrels by contacting BOS:311. Dial **3-1-1** or visit **[boston.gov/311](https://boston.gov/311)**.  
We allow for five stickers per household. Paper leaf bags do not need labels.
- Tie branches with string. Branches can be a maximum of 3 feet in length and 1 inch max diameter.
- Place yard waste on the curb **by 6 a.m. on the first recycling day of the week, or after 5 p.m. the night before** your scheduled day.
- We also hold 20 drop-off events at our composting facility in Mattapan. Visit **[boston.gov/yard-waste](https://boston.gov/yard-waste)** for dates.
- If you have two recycling days per week, leaf and yard waste collection is only on your first recycling day of the week.
- We don’t collect leaf and yard waste curbside on non-scheduled yard waste weeks.

For collection dates, visit **[boston.gov/yard-waste](https://boston.gov/yard-waste)**

### CHRISTMAS TREES

We collect Christmas trees during the first two full weeks in January after the Christmas holiday. If you have two recycling days, we pick up trees on your first recycling day. Set your tree out at the curb on your recycling day. Remember to remove decorations, wires, lights, and stands. Do not put your tree in a plastic bag.

## FOOD WASTE

### CURBSIDE COMPOSTING

The City of Boston is now collecting compost curbside!

Visit **[boston.gov/curbside-food-waste](https://boston.gov/curbside-food-waste)** for more information.

### COMMUNITY COMPOSTING

Composting is the controlled decomposition of organic material, such as yard waste and food scraps. Composting is a great way to reduce your waste and produce a natural soil fertilizer.

**Project Oscar** is the City of Boston's first community composting program. Large containers, located throughout the City, are open 24/7 for residents to dispose of their food waste.

**Farmers Market Food Waste Drop-offs** are located at participating local farmers markets, during hours of operation. The best part is, farmers take your compost back to their farms to help grow the fruits and vegetables you love!

**Community Garden Compost Drop-off:** The City of Boston is partnering with local community gardens as neighborhood food scrap drop-off sites. We're providing them with the tools, training, and support to compost their neighbors' food waste.

### COMPOSTING AT HOME

Through Boston Building Resources, you can buy subsidized compost bins and kitchen and scrap buckets. Bins and buckets are available to purchase Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m., at the Boston Building Resources location on 100 Terrace Street in Mission Hill. Contact BOS:311 by dialing **3-1-1**.

To learn more about how you can start composting your food waste, visit **[boston.gov/food-waste](https://boston.gov/food-waste)**

## DONATING HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Before you throw unwanted items in the trash, think about if they could be used or re-purposed by another person. Consider donating clothes, furniture, and small appliances to local organizations that accept donations. Learn more at [boston.gov/zero-waste-directory](https://boston.gov/zero-waste-directory)

For updated information on City of Boston textile recycling programs, visit [boston.gov/textiles](https://boston.gov/textiles)

Looking to donate doors, windows, or bathroom fixtures? Check out Boston Building Resources at [Bostonbuildingresources.com](https://Bostonbuildingresources.com)



## HAZARDOUS WASTE DROP-OFF

We hold drop-off days for household hazardous waste during the year. Boston residents can safely dispose of hazardous waste and shred unwanted documents for free. Please note:

- We only take waste from Boston residents. You need to show us proof of your residency. We will not take any waste from businesses.
- Latex and acrylic paint are NOT hazardous. Just let the paint dry out in the can and put it out on your trash day.
- We offer paper shredding at all of our events. We will shred up to 10 copy paper size boxes or containers of your personal documents.
- We accept all clothing and textiles, including pants, coats, hats, and suits.
- You can also recycle electronics at this event. We don't take commercial material from businesses.

To learn more about what items we will and won't accept, visit **[boston.gov/hazardous-waste](https://boston.gov/hazardous-waste)**

## MEDICINE AND SYRINGES

**Did you find a syringe or needle on the street?** To safely dispose of it, contact BOS:311 by dialing **3-1-1** for help.

**Have unused or expired medications?** There are MedReturn Drug Collection Kiosks at 11 Boston Police Department Stations. The kiosks are open to all residents, 24 hours a day, seven days a week — no questions asked. To learn more visit **[boston.gov/drug-kiosks](https://boston.gov/drug-kiosks)**

# RECYCLING GUIDE

Tear this page off and put it somewhere you can easily access it.

Still not sure what can and can't go in your recycling bin? Download the Trash Day App and use the waste sorting tool. Learn more at [boston.gov/zero-waste](https://boston.gov/zero-waste)

## ITEMS YOU CAN RECYCLE



### METAL

Drink cans, soup and vegetable cans, and aluminum foil



### PLASTIC BOTTLES, JUGS, TUBS, AND LIDS

Food containers, soda, water bottles, jars, etc.



### GLASS

Drink bottles, pickle jars, and mason jars



### PAPER

Office paper, newspaper, paper bags, magazines, and junk mail



### CARDBOARD

Shipping boxes, cereal boxes, egg cartons, cardboard tubes



### PIZZA BOXES

Remove food, pizza savers (pizza tables), and liners

## ITEMS YOU CAN'T RECYCLE

- Plastic bags
- Bagged recyclables
- Hoses and Ropes
- Scrap metal items
- Batteries
- Plastic cutlery and straws
- Electronics
- Styrofoam
- Black plastic takeout containers

## OTHER ITEMS



### CLOTHES

Donate if you can  
[boston.gov/textiles](https://boston.gov/textiles)



### FOOD WASTE

Compost if you can  
[boston.gov/compost](https://boston.gov/compost)

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**[boston.gov/zero-waste](https://boston.gov/zero-waste)**